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SIPDIS

PASS TO PM/WRA DNETLAND AND PPOPE

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SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE: UPDATE ON USG HUMANITARIAN DEMINING ASSISTANCE

Summary

1. PM/WRA Program Officer Deborah Netland and PM/WRA Foreign Affairs Officer Peggy Pope visited Mozambique April 26 - May 6. During their visit they examined the impact of USG humanitarian demining assistance and strongly urged the GRM to play a much more active role in supporting its mine action program. Although GRM financial and institutional support for national capacity building has been modest to date, the GRM appears to be making stronger efforts in the area. Visits to Department of State (DOS) sites in the northern provinces of Zambezia and Cabo Delgado showed steady progress towards reaching targeted task completion dates of 2005 and 2007, respectively. End summary.

Background

2. Since the 1992 signing of the Rome Peace Accord, Mozambique has worked to rid itself of land mines laid by combatants both in the struggle for independence and the ensuing civil war. The total number of land mines is not known, but cumulative clearance statistics over the past decade indicate that the land mine contamination is significantly less than early estimates of one to two million mines.

3. The presence, suspected or known, of land mines and unexploded ordinances (UXOs) has had a direct impact on the GRM's ability to achieve its poverty reduction objectives, and remains an obstacle to rural development and reconstruction efforts. Though demining activity has allowed rehabilitation of most key transportation links, more demining must occur to enable farmers to return to extensive areas of agricultural land, to provide access to water sources in many areas and to make safe travel along many tertiary roads. Economic development is the focus of a substantial amount of USG assistance, and demining assistance is a key aspect of this effort. To date the USG has provided Mozambique with over USD 36 million to the country's Humanitarian Demining Program.

4. According to the National Demining Institute's (IND) 2004 Annual Report, demining operators removed 18,539 mines and 2,712 UXOs in 2004. The IND recorded 13 land mine accidents, in which three people were killed and 27 injured. Twenty-one donors provided USD 14.5 million for Mozambique's Mine Action Program in 2004, including USD 1.5 million provided by the USG. The GRM provided approximately USD 9 million in support of IND activities. According to IND's 2005 Mine Action Plan, 15 donors have pledged support of USD 10.6 million, including USD 2.3 million promised by the USG.

National Capacity Building: FADM Humanitarian Demining Unit

5. The USG has long recognized the importance of building and supporting a national capacity for mine clearance in Mozambique. Since 1993 the USG has contributed more than USD 11 million in the training and equipping of a demining unit in the Mozambican Armed Forces (FADM). Currently made up of approximately 50 technicians and support staff, this unit is engaged in mine clearance in Boquisso, Maputo province and plans to deploy to the Zimbabwe border in mid-2005.

6. To date GRM financial and institutional support for the FADM demining unit has been limited; virtually all of its demining funding has been devoted to IND. However, in the face of decreased donor funding, the GRM appears to be willing to provide more support. During an April 26 meeting with Program Officer Netland and Foreign Affairs Officer Pope, Mozambican Minister of Defense Joaquim Dai pledged to try to increase capacity within the FADM to support Mozambique's future mine action needs. He recognized that NGOs would be exiting Mozambique soon, many as early as next year, leaving the GRM to deal with any residual land mine issues. Netland cautioned Minister Dai that expansion of the current USG program would only occur if the GRM demonstrated more support (e.g. budget) for maintenance of the existing unit. (Note: Currently, the DOS program not only provides essential equipment and training, but it also covers operational costs such as food stipends and fuel. End note.) Minister Dai agreed that GRM budget support for the program was warranted, and stated he would work within his capacity as a member of the Council of Ministers to address the issue.

17. On April 28, accompanied by Poloff, DATT, RONCO Contractor Steven Brown, Ministry of Defense Director of Administration Adelaide Gutha, and Commander of the Practical Engineering School Colonel Dias, Netland and Pope visited FADM's National Demining Training Center and nearby operational site under clearance by the FADM demining unit. Netland was pleased with the increased level of professionalism and operational skill demonstrated by the unit, noting that standard operating procedures, such as sign-in sheets, were being used, unlike on previous site visits. In response to requests by Colonel Dias to expand USG-funded training to an additional two units, Netland reiterated the need for demonstrated support by the GRM before growing the program could be considered. Director Gutha expressed confidence that Minister Dai had picked up on the message, and stated that the new Guebuza government considered demining a national priority under its poverty alleviation plan.

18. During an April 27 meeting with IND Director Gamiliel Mungumbe, Netland and Pope received further indications that the Guebuza government intends to make FADM the operational unit of Mozambique's national demining capacity. He also stated that demining had been identified as a national priority by the new administration, which he believed should facilitate budget support in the future, though he conceded any provision would initially be modest.

HALO Trust in Zambezia and Cabo Delgado

19. The GRM's poverty reduction and development strategy focuses largely on the northern provinces. The presence of land mines still impedes the continued rehabilitation of infrastructure and development of fertile agriculture areas, particularly along the Tanzanian border in Cabo Delgado province. Three mine belts approximately 100 meters in width and totaling approximately 96 kilometers in length were laid with more than 130,000 mines by the Portuguese military during colonial times. Clearance of these belts is vital to the facilitation of cross-border trade and increased agricultural development. HALO Trust is the only long-term humanitarian demining operator in northern Mozambique. The DOS currently funds six manual teams at the northern border in Cabo Delgado and two manual teams in Zambezia province.

10. On May 4, Netland and Pope, accompanied by Poloff and HALO Trust Country Manager Tim Turner, conducted a site visit of HALO Trust's northern border operations. As these minefields were laid in keeping with Geneva Convention standards (e.g. marked), local residents are aware of their existence and have remained off the land. However the areas immediately adjacent to the minefields are fertile and increasingly cultivated by local peasant farmers. Demand for land has made the clearance of this area critical to the economic development of the local population. DOS-funded teams continue to make steady progress, lifting approximately 2,000 mines and UXOs a month. Despite setbacks, including the discovery of a two km section of mine belt laid with undetectable anti-personnel mines, Turner projects a completion date of early 2007 for the northern border project.

11. Earlier, on May 2, the group visited the operational site at Derre, Zambezia province. DOS-funded teams were deployed to the area following a mine accident in 2004, which occurred 300 meters beyond where HALO ceased clearance operations in December 2003. Subsequent survey and clearance of the area uncovered a defensive mine belt laid by FRELIMO forces during the civil war that, unbeknownst to the local population, crossed a heavily trafficked pedestrian path leading from the village chief's home to the central market area.

12. Clearance in Derre is expected to conclude by late 2005, with final work done by Japanese-funded teams who will take over operations once the DOS task order ends on August 31, 2005. With expectations of a mine-safe Zambezia province by the end of 2005, DOS funding for HALO Trust operations will be focused on accelerating the northern border clearance project (Note: The DOS is the currently the sole donor for the mine removal along the Tanzanian border. End note.)

The Adopt-a-Minefield Experience

13. On April 27 Netland, Pope and Poloff met with Isabel dos Santos, IND Program Officer for the Adopt-a-Minefield (AAM) program to discuss progress on USG-funded AAM clearance sites. DOS provided USD 68,184 in FY03 to clear three small minefields in the southern provinces of Maputo and Inhambane. Though two of the tasks are completed, clearance continues on the remaining site located in Vilankulos, Inhambane province. Netland expressed disappointment over the lag between fund allocation and task completion under the AAM program. Santos attributed the delay to the AAM's complex fund disbursement system, which requires monies be funneled through the UN Association of the United States (UNAUSA) and UN Development Program (UNDP) in Mozambique before they are

passed to the IND for tasking. Netland stated she was doubtful DOS would work with the AAM program again unless the funding mechanism could be streamlined. Santos expressed hope that AAM would be able to accommodate the needs of DOS, should funds for the program become available in the future.

14. During an April 29 site visit to the active USG-funded AAM site, under clearance by NGO Handicap International, Netland and Poloff received a comprehensive project briefing and demonstration of the manual mining techniques employed by HI. Coordinator of Mine Action Planning and Monitoring for Handicap International (HI) Patricio Bitunga, who accompanied the delegation, expected the task to be completed by the end of May. (Comment: As of May 27, clearing was still underway. End comment.) The site, which lies next to a lake adjoining the town of Vilanculos, is fertile agricultural land. Despite warning signs posted in the area, accidents continue to happen as people attempt to fish and cultivate the affected land. Poloff will remain in close contact with Santos and Bitunga to coordinate USG participation in the formal handover ceremony.

Comment: Next Steps

15. The planned withdrawal of international demining NGOs and decreased donor funding for mine action in Mozambique have pushed the GRM to think more strategically about the future of its Mine Action Program. For the first time, significant space has been given to mine action in the new administration's "Five Year Plan," and there is every indication that mine action will be streamlined into GRM policy making. The GRM still faces significant budgetary constraints, however, and it is unrealistic to expect it will fund mine action without some continued donor support, at least in the short- to mid-term. The Embassy will continue to work with the GRM to build government budget support for the FADM demining unit to ensure Mozambique is left with an indigenous demining capacity for long-term application. End Comment.

16. Netland cleared this message in draft.
La Lime